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**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION INNOVATION**  
March 19, 2014

The House Committee on Education Innovation held its fourth meeting on March 19, 2014, at 12:00 noon at the Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience, Vernon G. James Research and Extension Center, 207 Research Station Road, Plymouth, NC 27962. Co-Chair Susan Martin presided, and other committee members present were Co-Chair Craig Horn, Representative Phil Shepard, and public members Superintendent Sean Bulson, Superintendent Sue Burgess, Ms. Karyn Dickerson, Mrs. Ann Goodnight, and Mrs. Anna Spangler Nelson. The visitor registration is attached as Exhibit 1, and the agenda is attached as Exhibit 2.

Co-Chairman Susan Martin called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.m. and welcomed members and guests. She introduced Co-Chairman Craig Horn, and the Sergeant-at-Arms staff serving the committee: Fred Hines and John Brandon. She thanked the staff who had travelled from Raleigh.

Since a quorum was not present, the chair postponed approval of the February minutes until the next meeting.

Chairman Martin recognized Co-Chairman Horn for comments. Co-Chairman Horn said prior to the Plymouth meeting there was a terrific opportunity in Greenville to see the North Carolina New Teacher Support Program in action as implemented by the University of North Carolina System. A copy of the agenda from the Greenville visit is attached as Exhibit 3.

Co-Chair Horn said this would be the last meeting on the road prior to the short session of the General Assembly. He said there would be one more meeting in Raleigh on April 23<sup>rd</sup> to write an interim report to the General Assembly. He asked members to be thinking about their recommendations, and he said the chairs would send out a memorandum to members prior to the April meeting with draft suggestions.

Chairman Martin recognized Mr. Hallet Davis, the committee's host and the Principal of Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience (NERSBA), for his presentation.

Mr. Davis said on behalf of Dr. David Peele, the entire NERSBA Board of Directors, their teaching faculty, their support staff, and their scholars he thanked the committee for giving them the opportunity to host them. He also thanked Ms. Denise Adams and Ms. Kara McCraw from the legislative staff for pulling the program together.

Mr. Davis introduced Dr. David Peele, President of Avoca, Inc. (a leading bio-tech firm in the area) and Chairman of the Board of Directors for NERSBA.

Dr. Peele said NERSBA is important from a business standpoint. He said the board is unique in that half of the membership is made up of educators from each of the five counties that participate in the regional school and the other half is made up of business people.

Dr. Peele said the school has a threefold function. The number one function is to educate young people with an interest toward bioscience and agriculture. The second is professional development for the regional school for five participating counties. They have on staff one person who is actually funded by the Carnegie Foundation who is only involved in math professional development, which is used not only at NERSBA but also in participating schools. As a business person, the most important function to Dr. Peele is workforce development. When students leave this school after five years, Dr. Peele said they will be ready to enter the workforce. If they want to go on to a four-year or two-year college, they will be prepared to do that. But if they elect to work at a high-technology biotech company, they will have the skills to do that. If they want to go back and work on their own family farm, they understand math, problem solving, and communications, which is important because farming is not what it was 30 years ago.

Dr. Peele said the business community has become involved with the school because they want to have a say in how the school is run to make sure that the academic programs marry up with what they see as needed in industry.

Mr. Davis said they were fortunate to be partnered with the North Carolina New Schools organization, which has been very supportive of their school and their organization. He said he could not say enough about the staff development and leadership that Lynn Garrison and the staff have provided their school since its inception.

Mr. Davis said back in the fall a video crew came in to present a very professional video on behalf of the Carnegie Foundation. He said the video shows where the school is and what their goal is all about. He showed the short film as a product of the North Carolina New Schools organization.

Mr. Davis then showed a PowerPoint presentation to show what the school is all about. That presentation is attached as Exhibit 4.

Mr. Davis said they went to work in April of 2012 with a basic idea of what the school could be. He said he gave a lot of credit to their teachers, students, and parents for taking a big chance on them. He said they are currently making preparations for the 2014-15 school year.

Mr. Davis said they are unique in that they operate on a 200-day calendar. He said he thought that would be a deal breaker for a lot of kids, but they have not lost the first student or parent because of the calendar. He said they have time to incorporate their important field experiences into the 200-day school year.

Mr. Davis said the vision for the school is that they want to be a statewide model for STEM education, and their students identify with STEM education and know it refers to science, technology, engineering and math. Mr. Davis said their mission statement is to give their students the opportunity to enter into the workforce. He said they want to be a catalyst for economic development in Northeastern North Carolina. He said they want their students to earn up to two years of college credit but also be able to go to work. They want to attract business and industry in Northeastern North Carolina.

Mr. Davis said what is very special about this school is the opportunity students have to work with animal scientists, researchers, and crop scientists who are at the Tidewater Research Station. He said that is the most appealing part of the school. For a student interested in a career in veterinarian medicine, where is there a better opportunity than to come to this school and partner with their animal scientists and livestock people? If a student wants to go into research and development, what better opportunity exists than working alongside the crop scientists and entomologists at the Tidewater Research Station? Mr. Davis said if they haven't done anything else they have opened students' and parents' eyes to what goes on at the Tidewater Research Station.

Mr. Davis said they bring in kids from five different counties—some of them travelling two hours to get there. A focal part of their instructional program is students working in teams, and also learning public speaking. Introducing students to industry and occupations in biotechnology is also important. He said North Carolina is the number three biotechnology state in the nation, and the biotechnology jobs employ about 227,000 people in North Carolina. He said they want to make sure their kids can link up with those opportunities, and they want to be sure they can attract business and industry to Northeastern North Carolina because of their school's location.

Mr. Davis said technology is very important. Their board makes a very strong commitment to all of their students to have their own personal devices. He said they have a very open attitude toward utilizing technology. A teacher will get to a certain place in the class and say, "Okay, take your cell phones out." Kids will snap a picture of what is taking place in the classroom and incorporate that on a daily basis. He said in the palm of your hand you can be in contact with anything happening on the face of this planet on a daily basis. He said the incorporation of technology has been very successful, and he credited Ms. Julie Gurganus and the whole staff for making all that happen.

Mr. Davis said they want kids to think, smell, taste, and believe everything to do about college. Their primary mission is to attract first generation college families. He said about 65% of their students come from true first generation college families where their parents have never stepped on a college campus. They want their students to believe that they can secure a college education. When a student leaves after five years, Mr. Davis said they want that student to have completed their high school graduation requirements and two years of college credit. They can take that and go anywhere they want to, even though they are tied to NC State University and have a relationship with that school. Whether it is NC State, East Carolina, UNC-Wilmington, or wherever, they want their students to know the opportunities that exist for them. They are developing relationships every day with the universities and the community college system. He said they already have in place and are working toward a very strong relationship with the biotech program at Pitt Community College. He said their needs to be some tweaking with legislation affecting their school and said he would appreciate the Committee's support in that endeavor.

Mr. Davis said they also want to be involved with every community that is a part of their school. He said there are five communities and five LEAs. He said they are trying to get the

word out about their school, and it is a very time-consuming process. They try to involve their kids and participate in as many different experiences as they possibly can. He said one of the highlights of their year back in August was a visit to their campus by the U. S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. He said he didn't believe the kids recognized the significance of having a member of the president's cabinet present on their campus and the commitment that he wants to make toward making the school successful.

Mr. Davis said the leadership development aspect is very essential. He said they had 22 students in October attend the National FFA in Louisville, Kentucky. He said that was significant for a school with 112 students. He said what is more important is the opportunities that their kids have to participate in leadership development activities through their involvement with FFA. When those kids put on their blue and gold jackets, they take pride in themselves and pride in their school. He said he could not say enough about the unique and innovative experiences that their kids have had through FFA that they would not have gotten in a traditional school setting.

Mr. Davis said in talking to their students you would get different ideas and themes about the school, but the basis would be that their school is a different way of teaching and a different way of learning.

Mr. Davis said they are only in their second year of operation and are not where they want to be, but they want to be able to continue to grow and develop their school and to develop Northeastern North Carolina. They realize that they have challenges, but they see them as opportunities in terms of the tweaking that they need to do and the development they need to do in respect to their curriculum and school to find ways to meet the needs of Northeastern North Carolina.

Mr. Davis said Ms. Julie Gurganus and Ms. Tracie Asby would talk about what they have done with respect to technology and with respect to the curriculum at NERSBA.

Ms. Gurganus said each student does have their own technology device, so they are a one-to-one school. The students take them home with them, and they have content filtering so that when they are at home it redirects them back to the school and they are filtered at home and on site. She said they utilize Edmodo Learning Management System, and each student has their own email, which helps to promote student collaboration and teacher/student collaboration.

Ms. Gurganus said they have a lot of things they use with technology. They have probeware and the new cell and graphing calculators, but students also use several resources on their laptops. They also participate in community college classes online as well as NCVPS classes.

Ms. Asby referenced Handout 5, showing innovative structures and practices at NERSBA. She said the pathways are specifically listed on their handout telling how they relate to college and career readiness. She pointed out the bottom of the handout lists the immediate needs for a successful NERSBA.

Mr. Davis thanked the committee members for the opportunity to talk with them.

Chairman Martin asked for questions from the committee, and recognized Co-Chair Horn.

Co-Chair Horn asked when they got laptop technology and how they paid for it.

Ms. Gurganus said the first year they had Race to the Top Funds and were able to purchase them with those funds. This year she said they had a lease agreement using local funds. They did not receive Race to the Top funds this year.

As a follow-up, Co-Chair Horn asked how they were able to get teachers up to speed on utilizing this technology in the classroom.

Ms. Gurganus said they were blessed that the teachers were very open to any changes and new ideas, and most of their teachers were already very technology literate; but she taught online classes at the school through Intel Education. Also, they partnered with the Friday Institute and North Carolina New Schools in providing many training opportunities for the teachers on-site as well as outside.

Chairman Martin recognized Representative Shepard, and he asked Mr. Davis if they had any data comparing how their students performed on end of year testing as compared to similar counterparts in other schools.

Mr. Davis said they had only one year of data since last year was their first year of operation; however, they were number three in the Northeast Region in terms of overall composite scores, and they were very pleased.

The chair recognized Superintendent Bulson, and he asked for the distinction between Ms. Gurganus' role as an instructional technology facilitator and what folks might think of as someone who provides tech support.

Ms. Gurganus said she does both. She said they do not have an LEA over them; they are their own LEA, so she is the only technology person on campus. After she was hired as technology facilitator she thought she would be in classes all the time, but then she was told there was no Internet access there, so she started from scratch literally. She said she actually filled the technical as well as the instructional role.

Ms. Gurganus said she does a lot of her own troubleshooting, but when they purchased their devices they purchased three years of on-site support and accidental damage protections, and they did that to help with the support.

Dr. Peele said Ms. Garganus' salary was supported by Golden Leaf funds for one and one-half years, but now she is paid with LEA funds. One of the requirements of Golden Leaf was that they had to have a technology facilitator. They put a lot of money into the computers, and they wanted to make sure they were going to be utilized.

The chair recognized Mrs. Nelson for a question. She asked Mr. Davis how they pay for the extra 20 days of school and how important the calendar flexibility is to their mission. And, how hard was it to get that calendar flexibility?

Mr. Davis said the idea of a 200-day school year was put in place when the legislation (SB 125) was developed around the school. He said they have 12 or 14 days during the school year that they call satellite days. Instead of students coming to the school, the teachers go out to the districts. For example, he said next week the kids in Martin County will meet over at Martin Community College, the kids from Pitt County will meet at the Ag Extension Building in Greenville, the kids from Washington and Tyrell Counties will come to the school, and the kids in Beaufort County will go to the Ag Extension Building in Beaufort County. The teachers will go out to those sites, and there is an instructional plan in place for those days. He said that has worked very well.

The chair recognized Superintendent Burgess and she asked about the teacher contract and how many days are specifically allocated for professional development for teachers.

Mr. Davis said their teachers are employed 11 and 12 months. He said the first group of teachers they hired during the 2012-13 school year was employed for 12 months. With the support of the North Carolina New Schools organization, he said they have enormous staff development integrated throughout the school year. He said the teachers they hired this past year are employed 11 months, and they operate close to 11 months so those teachers come in two weeks before school and stay about two weeks after the school year.

The chair recognized Mrs. Goodnight for a question about facilities. If they add a grade for the next few years, she asked how they would accommodate the enrollment.

Mr. Davis said they obviously want to be located very close to the Tidewater Research Station, so that is an issue that their Board is working through right now.

Chairman Martin thanked Mr. Davis for the NERSBA presentation and invited Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli from NCSU to come forward to talk about the Northeast Leadership Academy.

Dr. Fusarelli said the Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA) is not your typical principal preparation program. She said she brought with her three of her graduates: Erin Swanson, Mark Barfield, and Christina Williams. She said she would skip part of the PowerPoint presentation (Exhibit 5) to allow them to address the group because those who went through the program can speak best about how it impacted them in their practice. A second handout from NELA is attached as Exhibit 6.

Dr. Fusarelli believes that great schools have great leaders, and these great leaders have a multiplier effect. A principal impacts teachers and those teachers then impact students. She said nowhere is there a greater need to have excellent principals than in Northeast North Carolina.

She said Northeast North Carolina is a geographically isolated area, and it is difficult to recruit and retain high-quality teachers, making the job of the principal even more important



because not only do they have to work to recruit great teachers, but they also have to work to retain those teachers.

A new study from Harvard indicted that principals in high-poverty schools have twice the impact as principals in low-poverty schools. Part of the reason is that if they are able to keep the effective teachers in their buildings, then the power of that is exponential.

Dr. Fusarellia said the number one reason teachers stay in their jobs is that the principal creates a great climate—a culture that is conducive to teaching and learning and helps support kids and their families. The number one reason effective teachers leave is because the principal doesn't support them.

Dr. Fusarelli said we have to train principals, especially in the Northeast Region, to be the type of principal who can recruit, develop and retain teachers. This is a unique skillset because the teacher who might be low performing might also be your preacher's wife or the school board member's husband. The principal must have the courage to have crucial conversations about what they need to do to improve their practice, and then have to see them at the Sunday picnic after church.

Dr. Fusarelli said the people NELA recruits to their program are committed, energized, and passionate about the work they do; and they have the firm belief that everything they do in their practice has to be in the best interests of the children in their building. She said that, unfortunately, is not the case in some of the schools in our state.

Dr. Fusarelli said the work of NELA is to find the right folks to lead schools with high teacher turnover and mostly impoverished students who are reading at below grade level. And the training they provide is innovative and very different from the typical preparation program.

Dr. Fusarelli said her work over the last decade began in Kentucky working in rural Appalachia on a project with the U. S. Department of Education that was recognized as one of the top six programs in the country as being innovative in improving performance in rural schools. When Dr. Fusarelli came to North Carolina she wanted to continue to work with rural schools, and she was fortunate to get funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which gave her a dream opportunity. She brought on a thought partner, Matthew Militello, a professor at NC State, and they were able to explore the literature and research and do site visits before vetting what they developed as a program with practitioners in rural settings. She said they started the Northeast Leadership Academy in 2010 on a wing and a prayer, and it was primarily targeted to try to help develop leaders in lower Halifax County where there was great need. They didn't know if they would have funding for the next year or not. Fortunately they got Race to the Top funding, and since then the program has received a lot of accolades from organizations from organizations across the country. Recently, she said they received another U.S. Department of Education grant of \$4.7 million to continue the program.

Dr. Fusarellai said NELA is a continuation of a scaled-back version of the Principal Development Program, but it is also an expansion because Superintendents told them they need help in providing professional development opportunities for their current principals. She said in

NELA they train the principals alongside their interns. A mentor principal in NELA goes through the Distinguished Leaders in Practice Program, which is a year-long program of professional development. She said superintendents saw that as an effective practice and they wanted more, so they included that in the grant.

Dr. Fusarelli said the last page of the NELA handout describes the admissions process. She said they move beyond GPAs and test scores because those don't help her to see if applicants will have the disposition skillsets. Applicants need the right passion and orientation and need to really truly care about kids. Furthermore, they need the desire to engage in the hard work of leading a low-performing school.

Applicants must come in and write a memo on the spot in 20 minutes about a real life scenario such as a gun being on campus today. That memo would theoretically go home in the backpack of every kid on campus. They would have a one-on-one with a real K-12 student, which would be videotaped; and they have to give feedback to a teacher after watching a videotape of their teaching. She said there are a lot of activities, and they look for some minimum dispositions, not necessarily a complete skillset.

Dr. Fusarelli said their fellows consist of long-time practitioners, people who have alternative licensure, and a large component (25 to 35%) of Teach for America alumni. She said the former teachers must have been effective in their classrooms. She said their fellows have a passion to do something more and are hungry for leadership opportunities.

Dr. Fusarelli said NELA is a two-year funded program, and it is a very customized Masters of School Administration degree. She said they have professors at NC State, and every semester they also have practicing current principals; so they hear what the forward thinking is, and they learn how to actually apply that in the classroom.

Dr. Fusarelli said their fellows do not do typical Masters' papers. There are a series of developmental projects. For example, they are given a real problem, such as writing a school improvement plan based on data from their schools. They are then required to go teach that to the other teachers in their building.

Dr. Fusarelli went over the training their fellows receive, and said they have year-long clinical residency in their second year in addition to a summer internship. She said they also learn how to write a grant that ties a community agency to the school, and they have had quite a few of those funded.

Dr. Fusarelli said NELA has very intensive executive coaching, development of current principals, the integration of technology, and on-going support for graduates, which is a huge piece that is missing from the campus program. She said they also have dynamic feedback loops for improvement.

Graduates give a three-year commitment to stay in the region, and there is an inter-district agreement between the superintendents that was not there before. They have a 90%



placement rate in the first year after a degree compared to a national average of 32 to 34%. Five years out, there is a 50% placement rate.

Dr. Fusarelli said NELA fellows are: 7 principals, 26 assistant principals, 3 who work in central offices, 4 teacher leaders, and 19 interns who are about to be looking for jobs—all since 2010.

Dr. Fusarelli introduced Ms. Erin Swanson, Principal of Stocks Elementary in Edgecombe County. She said next year she will be the Principal of the new Martin Millennium Global Academy in Edgecombe County. She said she was a 2012 graduate of NELA, and her assistant principal is a 2013 graduate.

Ms. Swanson said she was accepted to NELA in 2010 after three years of serving as the Executive Director of Teach for America in Eastern North Carolina. In 2002, Ms. Swanson was a Teach for America Corps member in Warren County. Although she had experience in rural Northeastern North Carolina, it had been ten years she had lived and worked in Eastern North Carolina.

Ms. Swanson said it was the role playing aspect of NELA that attracted her to the program. She knew she would learn a tremendous amount about what it would mean to be a leader in her community. She said problems of practice that they addressed in NELA were relevant, and she calls on those experiences today in her role as a principal in Edgecombe County. She said they talked a lot about recruiting and retaining high-performing teachers, which is something she had to deal with in the middle of this year, as many schools do in this region. She said they talked about supporting their students and their families so they could be successful in the classroom; and a lot of her children are growing up in poverty. She said her school is 90% free and reduced-price lunch.

Ms. Swanson said at NELA they talked a lot about how they could help their kids have access to the types of enrichment opportunities that kids in Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill have in their backyards but don't exist in Tarboro. One way they learned to bring those opportunities into their schools and community was through community internships. She said each NELA fellow does a six-week internship in a community organization of their choice, and they work with the organization to write a proposal for a grant so they can receive some funding or support for an education-related initiative. Ms. Swanson said she worked at the Chamber of Commerce in Roanoke Rapids for her summer internship and worked with the board to write a proposal to fund an entrepreneurship program at Weldon High School. That was put into action the following year, and it provided a great opportunity for some kids. She said one of her cohort members helped get some funding to build a basketball court at a local community organization so that kids could come after school and play basketball. She said the networking helped them to connect with folks in the community who they can still call on for support. She said support from her fellow cohorts has also been a huge advantage because she can call on them for contacts that she might not have, and she continues to learn from them.

Ms. Swanson introduced Mr. Mark Barfield, Principal of Everetts Elementary, Halifax County, and a graduate of NELA. Mr. Barfield said at his school his assistant principal is also a NELA graduate.

Mr. Barfield said he knows he is a better leader because of the training he received from NELA. In the way of specialized training, Mr. Barfield had a session on facilitating leadership and crucial conversation. He said he is a naturally kind-hearted compassionate person and it was difficult for him to have tough conversations being direct and honest with a person. He said as a result of specialized training from NELA, which was videotaped, he learned what his strengths and weaknesses were so he could talk with teachers and tell them which areas they needed to improve on. He also learned how to have crucial conversations with parents about their children's progress, and conversations with members of the community.

At the beginning of the school year he introduced himself to the staff and they went through a facilitative leadership training where the staff was able to share what they liked, what they didn't like, and the areas they wanted to improve. He said that conversation was their guiding compass for this school year, and they maintain and keep focused on their mission and their vision.

He said he remembered vividly that on September 21, 2011, he failed his Operation NELA. He thought he had it from theory, but he was not able to put it into practice because he did not have the people skills. Constructive feedback from his classmates helped to give him the confidence he needs to deal with staff and people from the community in his present position.

Because of the passion he has for Northeastern North Carolina and because of the training of NELA, Mr. Barfield said he is able to make a difference in children's lives. He said their motto is "Education is our business—our only business." He said he is a better leader, a stronger leader, and a more effective leader because of the training he received from NELA.

Ms. Christina Williams, Principal, Scotland Neck Primary, Halifax County, came forward for her presentation. She said her school is in the lowest performing district in the State of North Carolina, and she said she was pleased to say she is a principal in Halifax County.

Ms. Williams talked about the year-long internship in the second year with the NELA program. She said it affords the fellows a great opportunity to actually work with a mentor principal in Executive Coach. She said Executive Coach was not affiliated with the school system or the district where they actually did their internship, so it gave them some extra support. She said once a week for 30 minutes she talked to her coach and they debriefed on what happened the week before. She said they also Skyped at least once a month, and every other month he would come and visit her on site. At the on-site visit, they discussed her problem of practice and working through it to assure success in the school where she did her internship.

Ms. Williams attributes her success to NELA. She was employed by Halifax County serving as a teacher for seven years in elementary education, fourth and fifth grade. She did three years with Abbott and loved the program because of all the different strategies and things she was able to do with the students. But someone from NELA saw something in her, and said, "You

can be an awesome leader. Step into this program, and take advantage of it. Try.” She said she stepped into it and tried, and she, too, failed her first Operation NELA. But she persevered, learned from other individuals, and came to appreciate constructive criticism. She was inspired to become a great leader, and she put every effort toward being successful. She always remembers and repeats this quote: “If it has to be, it begins with me.” If she wants change in Halifax County, if she wants students to be successful, the change begins with her. She lived in Halifax County and graduated from Halifax County schools, and she is back there to give her students and the community all she has. She said she thanks North Carolina State University for giving her that opportunity.

Dr. Fusarelli said she could talk a lot about some of the institutional barriers that they encountered in trying to execute NELA and some of the lessons that have been learned in trying to work with other organizations. She said there are a lot of partnerships that formed that did not formerly exist, such as partnerships with Rural School and Community Trust, 4H Extension Professors, NCPAPA, NCDPI, and others.

Dr. Fusarelli said there have been some barriers that they have had to work around. She said one thing in working with alternative licensure-type programs is that you need somebody who is in charge of a program who is really paying attention to the larger picture. And, it also has to be housed in some sort of institutional design that has life to it beyond that individual. She said in other states they have done experiments with regional leadership academies, and they were based on the dynamic of the leader who happened to be leading the organization at the time. She said there also needs to be a succession plan for the leadership academy and for the program.

The chair recognized Co-Chair Horn for a question. He asked Dr. Fusarelli if NELA had any interaction presently with NCCAT (NC Center for the Advancement of Teaching).

Dr. Fusarelli said they do some specialized training with NCCAT, but they also work with the Center for Quality Teaching and Learning and do more training with them than with NCCAT.

The chair recognized Mrs. Goodnight for a question. Mrs. Goodnight asked Dr. Fusarelli if she could figure out how to scale her program statewide. Dr. Fusarelli said yes that she had some great ideas about that.

Dr. Fusarelli said 50% of current principals are going to be eligible for retirement within the next three to four years, so how we are training the next generation of leaders is a critical issue. She has talked to Donna Peters and Anna Brady who are running the other two academies, and they all think it would be scalable across the state.

Chairman Martin introduced Ms. Tammi Sutton, the co-founder and Executive Director of KIPP ENC (Eastern North Carolina) for her presentation on KIPP Gaston College Preparatory (GCP), which is located in the Town of Gaston, Northampton County. A copy of her PowerPoint presentation is attached as Exhibit 8.

Ms. Sutton said she is a Teach for America Corps member who was placed in Gaston and has been there since 1996. She was the first and only person in her family to graduate from college, and she said she understands the transformational power that a college education can have and how that opens doors.

Ms. Sutton said they have been excited to work with NELA and see the transformational work they are doing in rural North Carolina to improve outcomes for children, particularly in underserved communities.

Ms. Sutton's first slide showed five graduates from the KIPP GCP campus, all five of whom qualified for free and reduced lunch. She said one of them was homeless in high school, and one has an IEP. She said they were students who were raised by grandparents and single parents. And, all five of them were first-generation college students. They now have college degrees from Wake Forest, UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC-Greensboro, and Morehouse. She said she is most proud to tell the Committee that after earning their degrees, all five of them chose to come back to their community to teach in its schools. She said this is a representation of their first class that began graduating from college in 2009, and they represent the trajectory that they hope for all of their students.

Ms. Sutton said she would take a few moments to tell the KIPP GCP story, give a synopsis of their results, show the model that they have used, and tell of the challenges along the way

Ms. Sutton said the school was founded on a peanut field. What was formerly 27 acres of peanuts and soybeans in 2001 transformed into a campus. She said they are part of the KIPP network of schools, which is a national organization committed to providing choice in underserved communities across the state. She said they were the first rural site for the KIPP Foundation, and now there are over 141 schools across the nation including 20 states and the District of Columbia. They now serve over 50,000 low-income children across the nation.

When they were founded in 2001, Ms. Sutton said they began with just one cohort, the fifth grade, and their school grew as that cohort matriculated to the next grade. As a Teach for America Corps member, Ms. Sutton has been in the area for five years. She said 70% of the first group of students they had were brothers, sisters, and cousins of her students at Gaston Middle School. Over time, as the school has grown, so has the radius it covers. She said they now have families who commute over an hour in each direction to attend their schools. In Gaston, they provide transportation to families in Vance County, so there are students who board a bus from Henderson and come every day. She said they also serve students in Rocky Mount and Bertie County. Currently there is a waiting list of over 500 families who are vying for the openings for their two entrance grades, which are kindergarten and the fifth grade. All of that has led them to apply for and be accepted to have their second school, which will open in Halifax County this fall, in addition to their middle school in Northampton County.

Ms. Sutton said their school mascot is the Pride, and there is an African proverb at the basis of what they do, which is, "The strength of the Pride is the lion, and the strength of the lion is the Pride." This collective sense of responsibility not only for their students but for their

community is what drives their school. She said the success of their school is not just determined by the individual success of some students but by all of them doing well.

In addition, as a school that is on a former peanut field, and with the huge legacy of slavery and segregation in their area, it is very important that their students understand that school is not just about getting a great education, but it's about making transformational change. It is about having the ability to have a life of choices and to be a revolutionary. To not just be able to sit at the table, but to have a power and voice in what happens. She said that is huge piece of why their school exists. And, a motto that they talk about a lot is, "We learn not for school but for life." They say to their students, "What are you doing that is going make life better for you and those around us?"

As a timeline, Ms. Sutton said they began in 2001 with just the fifth grade, which by the time their first cohort entered high school in 2005 they began their high school. They went back in 2012 and added a kindergarten, so now they have kindergarteners and first graders and in a few years as the first graders matriculate through fifth grade, they will serve 1200 students in Gaston and an additional 800 students in Halifax County. She said they are proud that one of their student's parents is actually starting that school in Halifax. She is from Eastern North Carolina, lived here her whole life, was a first-generation college student, went to school part-time and was a bus driver and cafeteria assistant working her way through college so that she could become a teacher, and she is now going to open KIPP Halifax College Prep in a few months.

Ms. Sutton said their mission is to empower all of their students with the skills, character, and knowledge necessary to do three things: succeed at the colleges of their choice, strengthen their community, and continuously fight for social change. They want well-rounded, critical thinkers, students who really have love of not only academics but also of arts and athletics, kids who can think through a problem and like to grapple with hard decision making. She said there is a focus on social justice throughout their school, so that is the lens through which students are looking at issues. What are all of the different groups that have been disenfranchised throughout society, and how is our education lifting all people along the way? There is a focus on community empowerment so it is not just about the student on their campus, but how they are helping to change the projector of others; and strengthening what is already so strong in the communities from which their students come. Through all of this, Ms. Sutton said the goal is to make multi-generational transformational change.

Having been in Gaston now for almost twenty years, Ms. Sutton said it has been gratifying to see the children of her former students come to her school and seeing the changes over time; to see the first group of students graduate from schools like the University of Pennsylvania, Duke, and the Universities of North Carolina; and to see how that affects their cousins and brothers and sisters with whom they share a trailer court or those who live down the path from them; and to see the huge change that it can create not only in one family but in a community. She said Marco, who was on the first page, graduated from UNC-G and has come back to teach sixth-grade history. He was the first person in his entire community to graduate from college. The power for him to be able to say that, and to walk into a classroom of 110 kids now his students, some of whom are his cousins and say, "I was the first to graduate from my



community, but you will make sure that I'm not the last," changes things over time; and that is a very important part of their school's mission.

Ms. Sutton went over their results over time. She pointed out test results from the spring of 2002 forward for both reading and math. The graphs show the percentage points by which GCP has outperformed Northampton County, Halifax County, and the State of North Carolina. She said 80% of their students are African Americans, about 75% qualify for free or reduced lunch. They have a special education population of about 9%, and they are outperforming the state average; and they have done that every year since they started in 2001. She said if you follow those kids through high school, in 2013 when all juniors in North Carolina began taking the ACT, KIPP Gaston students scored at or near the state and national averages in all sections.

Ms. Sutton said they still have a long way to go, but they are extremely proud of what their students have accomplished and are proud of the teachers pushing them along the way. She said it is important for them to follow kids because part of their mission is that they will succeed in college. She said saying that 100% of their seniors have been accepted to a four-year college means nothing if they are not graduating, so they work hard to track that data over time. Those first fifth graders that started in 2001 began graduating from college last spring, so they just have data from their first cohort. She said statistically ten percent of students from low-income communities graduate college within six years. Within four years of that first cohort, 44% had graduated college. They quadrupled the statistic that ten percent of them would graduate in six years. They are on track now that over 60% will have graduated within six years of graduation. She said they have students who are in law school, who are getting their PhD at Ohio State, who will complete their MBA program from East Carolina this year. She said she is proud to say that six of the first class are teachers here, one teaches in Halifax County, and one teaches in Newark, New Jersey. She said this data is important to them because this is not just about test scores, which are important, but this is about the lives of choices and opportunities. And there are stories behind these statistics of students from rural North Carolina who have now travelled across the world in summer programs, or in internships, or speak multiple languages. And, this is just their first class.

Ms. Sutton said Victoria Bennett was in the first class, and she just recently graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill. She was a Robertson Fellow, so she was able to go to both Carolina and Duke, but she chose Carolina. She is now working on her first year of law school at North Carolina Central on a full scholarship.

Ms. Sutton said she wanted to focus today on their approach, and the first thing she wanted to talk about was recruitment and professional development. She said you have to have the right people in the school. She said the person who is standing at the front of the room who is in charge of teaching kids is the most important adult in the building. Making sure that they are mission aligned is by far the first quality that they look for. Do they have the beliefs that KIPP GPC has about children? About how this is a civil rights movement to make sure that kids have access to a high-quality education. Making sure that they have a growth mindset, which they spend a lot of time talking about: they read the book and they talk about it non-stop all year. They have to believe that every child in their class is capable of doing amazing work. Wherever they are now, they have to believe that they can get beyond where anyone else ever believed that



they could go. Ms. Sutton said any time that somebody in her school says they don't know how to do "blank" or they can't "blank," they are also inserting the word, "yet." They have to not only be able to say yet, they have to believe yet; and that is huge. Ms. Sutton said beyond just loving their content, which they found lots of adults do, they have to love children more. They have to be as excited to say, "I teach fourth graders," as they are to say, "I teach math."

Ms. Sutton said being humble and hungry are the last two pieces. She said teaching is really hard work, and there are a lot of people who enter the profession having not failed at a lot of things before in life. They think that just because they had a really high GPA or just because they were a really good basketball player or whatever, 12-year-olds are going to listen to them. She said they learn really fast that that is not true, and they have to have the humility to say, "Okay, it's me." Ms. Sutton said of all the tool kits they tell teachers they can have in their belts, the first one they better pull every time is a mirror. She said they talk about that all the time. My kids didn't do their homework—pick up the mirror. What didn't you do that caused that outcome? She said it is huge that people can take that feedback and that they are very hungry for more.

Ms. Sutton said what is missing from these criteria is that they are highly qualified, or they have a teaching license. She said they believe and have learned over the last decade is that they can teach people how to teach. She said they have had to learn how to do that in rural North Carolina. She said it is not always easy to find great talent, particularly people who have licenses, people who are highly qualified. She said they are looking for people who fit that and then saying, "We can help those other people." It is hard in rural North Carolina when a candidate needs 20 credit hours. Finding that closest university is really difficult, and being able to tack those classes on when you want to stay after school with kids is really difficult. Going to a Saturday class when you'd rather go support them at a basketball game or a football game is a really hard decision. So one of the pieces that Ms. Sutton would love for the committee to figure out is how can results help you get to that license. If you are knocking it out of the park with test scores, and your kids are making huge gains, how can that count, too? If you are managing a class wonderfully and you have video to show that, do you really have to go take Management 101? She said those are all questions worth grappling about. She said at GCP it has been a struggle to make sure people are certified, licensed, and highly-qualified. Of course they need to be getting results; she said that goes without saying.

Number two, Ms. Sutton said they put a full-court press on professional development. It is consistent and constant. They go to school from 8:00 to 5:00 Monday through Thursdays, and on Fridays that go from 8:00 to 2:00. Kids go home at 2:00, and teachers stay. She said that is uninterrupted professional development time on their campus. She said it is research based, it is aligned to their mission, and it is aligned to their goals. She said it is differentiated in that there are new teachers on their campus who have that plus an hour a week plus a coach plus they are watching on-line videos. She said there are teachers at their school who are knocking it out of the park, and their professional development is on how to be a teacher-leader so they can coach others. They receive that training in addition. She said they meet as grade-level teams and as vertical teams. Their kindergarten teachers are talking to their senior English teachers about what is good writing because good writing as a senior should be intentionally where they are working back from for kindergartens. She said the clean paragraph that they are going to have to write on

the AP exam should be the same thing that kindergarteners are doing even though they can't write it yet; that should be the way they are approaching the non-fiction text that they are reading.

Ms. Sutton said they meet as a school—primary school, middle school and high school, and then they meet as an entire campus. She said they have learned over time that great teaching looks the same whether you are teaching fifth graders or juniors. The execution may be different, but the beliefs and the way people are checking for understanding and engaging students in the end have the same core beliefs and values.

Ms. Sutton said they are making sure they have the right people and making sure that they are providing development to make the right people better every single day, including themselves.

Family and community involvement is an important component of their school, and Ms. Sutton said they go door-to-door to recruit kids. She said last Friday when their students left at 2:00, all 80 adults on the campus took a kid with them and went throughout their most under-resourced communities across their two counties, walking door-to-door saying, "Let me explain to you our school." She said they tell parents there is no test to take, no tuition to pay; if this is something they want, they are asked to sign the form. She said their entire Spanish Department went to every Spanish-speaking community, and the fifth grade science teacher, who is fluent in Mandarin, went to those communities reaching out.

Beyond that interaction Ms. Sutton said the first interaction they have with the family, once their name is pulled in their lottery, is a home visit. Staff members, principal, teachers, and kids arrange a time to sit on the living room couch or at the dining room table to talk about their school. She said that is very important because a lot of their families did not have positive or welcoming experiences in school. She said they all have to realize they are on the same team, and the team is whatever their child's name is.

Included in the home conversations are kids from the school—kids who struggled, kids who have been held back, kids who are doing well, and the whole gambit. She said the one piece of paper they all sign that day is a commitment to excellence form, which is a promise that all three make. It is not a legally binding document, but it is the promise that the school makes to the child, the promise they ask the child to make, and promises they ask the parents to make.

Ms. Sutton said there are a lot of things they do over the course of the first year and in subsequent years to constantly invest in families. For example, their primary school does Family Saturday School. Once a month their kindergarteners and first graders go to school with their families. The family not only learns what their child is learning, they learn how to use those strategies at home. If they are working on the short vowel sounds, they show the family member how to practice at home. In addition to that, Ms. Sutton said they do parent workshops on such topics as how to start investing for a college education when kids are five years old. They have had college admission officers come. They have talked about health issues. She said they concentrate on how they can learn from parents and how they can educate parents.

Ms. Sutton said their high school has intersession classes, so at the end of each nine weeks, students who have done really well on their exams have a week where they are involved in intersession while kids who have struggled have a week of tutorial before the next quarter starts. Those who have mastered their lessons from the previous quarter have two options. One is that they can spend the week doing community service providing free labor to someone who can benefit from that. Two, they can benefit from parents and community members who come into the school and teach for a week a course that they are passionate about. For example, for a week every year, a bee keeper comes in and tells the kids about bee keeping and its rich history. Someone might talk about chess or micro-economics, and students have the opportunity to choose those courses while other kids are out in the community doing services based on their passions.

Ms. Sutton says when they think about innovation at their school, they think about doing whatever it takes. Literally, here is a problem. Here is what we tried. That didn't work. Innovate. Try something else. That didn't work. Try something else. She said a huge piece of that comes down to making sure that their staff has a shared vision and everyone is rowing in the same direction, which is a metaphor they use all the time. She said if they are rowing in the same direction, it is so much easier for autonomy and accountability. If they know what they are going to be held accountable for, then people can innovate and find strategies that work, find new strategies that work, or find strategies that are better than the ones that they thought worked.

Ms. Sutton said one way they do whatever it takes is by investing more time. They have the extended school day, they have time on Saturday, and they have an extended period of time during the summer. She said all teachers have cell phones, and they give families and students their cell phone numbers, including hers. If students have questions, they can call or text; and they have email addresses as well.

In summary, Ms. Sutton said the important pieces are hiring the right people, constantly developing them, looking at the school beyond their own walls to community and parents, and everyone being committed to doing whatever it takes to make sure that the promises made during that home visit are more than just pieces written on a paper but what actually happens in the lives of their children.

The chair recognized Mrs. Nelson who asked Ms. Sutton what freedoms and flexibilities she has at her school that moves the needle for student achievement that are not available at traditional schools. What are the levers that she has that are not available more widely?

Ms. Sutton said the most crucial is the power of a principal and his or her power to lead. She said the big freedoms are hiring decisions, the ability to remove a teacher who is not keeping promises to students, and control over their local budget. She said some districts have those powers, but as she talks to many principals across the state, unfortunately some are not able to do these things for some other reason beyond, "This is good for kids, and we should do it." She said it might be the fact that they can't take kids on a trip because of district policy, or they can't take a kid home from school because they are not allowed to have a kid in their car. She said those are a couple of pieces that disenfranchise a principal's ability to make choices in the best interests of kids.

As a follow-up, Mrs. Nelson asked how many days her students go to school.

Ms. Sutton said they go 188 days from 8:00 to 5:00, which is a longer day, and about one-third more time in school than the average school.

Chairman Martin asked whether they had extra-curricular activities after school or whether they used that extended day for extra-curricular activities.

Ms. Sutton said the answer was both. She said starting in kindergarten and with their students entering in fifth grade, all of the children learn to read music and play a musical instrument; and that is part of the day. She said art, physical education, and health are also part of the day. In addition to that, they have a full athletic program and a full club program, which depending on which school, can start at 4:00 or 5:00 and can run the same amount of time as for a kid at a traditional school.

Chairman Martin introduced Dr. Sandra McCullen, Associate Superintendent of Wayne County Schools, who brought greetings from Superintendent Dr. Steven Taylor and Board Chair John Grantham. Dr. McCullen's Powerpoint presentation is attached as Exhibit 9.

Dr. McCullen recognized Lee Johnson, Principal of Wayne Early Middle College, and Jamie Livengood, the military education counselor for Wayne County Public Schools. Dr. McCullen said Wayne County is home to Seymour Johnson Air Force base, who is their biggest employer. She said they, like many other rural counties, have funding issues. She referenced a statistical handout, which is attached as Exhibit 10. It shows community demographics with figures taken from the last census.

Dr. McCullen said they will be using lottery money to build new schools in the next couple of years. She highlighted the Work Keys/Career Readiness Certificate, which is a portable credential; the students are given a test and they come out with a career-ready certificate. She said they began testing in 2008 before it was a requirement of the accountability formula for the State of North Carolina. She said they did it in pilot programs at Wayne Early Middle College High School, Southern Wayne High School, and Spring Creek High School. They started with juniors and seniors and then it became part of the Eastern Region, which is made up of 13 counties. They became a work-ready community, which means that the high school graduation rate is at least 80% or shows a 1% increase every year. Also you must have a career readiness certificate rate of at least a 2% annual increase. The employers in your community must have at least 10 of the largest 20 employers using this as part of the way they employ people for their workforce. They must also have three letters of commitment from the county leaders.

In Wayne County since 2008, they have increased from 250 graduates to over 7,725 students who have a career readiness certificate. Some of these are bronze, silver or platinum. Currently Wayne County has 84.8% career completers versus 67.3% for the State of North Carolina. They are very proud of this and attribute some of this success rate to support from

Wayne Community College, including an employee of the college who works closely with all of the employers to help the students.

Dr. McCullen also wanted to highlight their innovative high schools and the New Schools Project. Purposeful design and redefining professionalism are the main two factors that make these schools successful. She invited Ms. Johnson to come forward to talk about her school.

Ms. Johnson said she is the Principal of Wayne Early Middle College High School. She recognized that the early college speakers for the day had many things in common, such as their small size, the culture that they build, and the professionalism of their teachers. She said she is probably the oldest, longest standing early college principal. She is in her 8<sup>th</sup> year at her school, and she said it gets better every year. They are working out the kinks, and their success rate grows every year. She said this is a concept that is working in North Carolina.

Ms. Johnson said they have students from grades 9-13. They start taking college classes as ninth graders, and the fifth year is optional. This year, out of a graduating class of 60 students, she had 14 come back for their fifth year. When students come in the door, teachers don't talk about high school dropouts, they talk about them being college graduates; and the students rise to the occasion. They work hard with them and provide a lot of support systems, and they have an opportunity to graduate from high school with a two-year college degree or ready to transfer with a transfer degree at no cost to the student for textbooks or tuition. Their target at Wayne Early Middle College is first generation college students, as defined by neither parent having a two-year or higher degree. Eighty percent of their student body are first generation. For the past 7 years, they have had a 100% graduation rate.

Ms. Johnson said that all of the electives are college classes, and all of the high school classes are offered at the honors level. She said they were very proud last year when people were talking about high school graduation rates; they had a 68% college graduation rate for 2013. Out of 61 students, 68% of them walked across the stage at the community college before they walked across the high school stage. As part of their college success rate, they have a liaison that works between them and the community college, and they define a college success rate as an A, B, or C in their college classes. They have 88% college success rate, and their students score an average of 14 points higher than the community college students.

Ms. Johnson believes that the success of Wayne Early Middle College High School is due to the culture that they have built. Every child is known, and every teacher knows every child. The environment is positive and nurturing, and they have tremendous support from both the community college and Wayne County Public Schools. She said they give her the autonomy in hiring her teachers and making her decisions. In addition, her school is on the campus of the community college so from day one her kids are college students in a college class.

Dr. McCullen recognized another New Schools Project, Wayne School of Engineering at Goldsboro High School. Goldsboro High School is an inner city high school that has grown from 76 students in their first class of ninth graders. Since that time, using New School concepts, they are now one of the four schools in North Carolina selected to model school status by the North Carolina New Schools Project, which means they are a learning lab. People go



there to visit and see how they can change education based on what they are seeing at this school. Also, it is a STEM school that is being studied by the University of Chicago and George Washington University to see how a school with so few resources had become so successful. They started with grades 9-12, but they have expanded to grades 6-12. They have transportation provided and an athletics program. Their starting times are 10:30 and 10:50, so the kids get to sleep late. She said research shows that high school students do better later in the day. Their graduation rate is over 91%, but this year they hope to be 100%. It's an honors curriculum, and student-based and project-based. Service hours are required of students, and their projects have included working with Cherry Hospital and the farm there, environmental issues, and world hunger. They use online classes and they partner with New Schools Project, Wayne Community College, ECU, and Goldsboro High School. Their staffs all participate in New Schools staff development, which is very important to the model.

Dr. McCullen wanted to share another successful idea that has been funded by the General Assembly. The Child and Family Support Teams Grant places a social worker and a school nurse at one school, who work with high-poverty students and families that really need support. She said this has helped to raise achievement levels for these students.

Dr. McCullen said their WISH Centers is another initiative she wanted to share. WISH stands for the Wayne Initiative for School Health, which are school-based health centers. It started in October of 1996 with a planning grant from the Duke Endowment, and over the years they have collaborated with Wayne Memorial Hospital, the Department of Health, Mental Health, Social Services, Communities in Schools, Goldsboro Pediatrics, and Wayne Community College. They got \$490,000 in Robert Wood Johnson funding in 1997, and they opened two of these centers at middle schools that had the highest needs and highest poverty rates. The grant was for three years, but they have been able to maintain these WISH centers through various funding sources like grants and in-kind contributions. These centers are like doctors' offices on the campus of these schools. Dr. McCullen pointed out statistics in Exhibit 9. She said that the WISH centers help keep students in school because they have reduced absences and a decrease in teen pregnancies. They were recognized by Judge Manning as one of the best things he has seen in schools. In 2005, they received a civic star award from the American Association of School Administration for the WISH centers.

Dr. McCullen invited Jamie Livengood to come forward and talk about the military child education coalition.

Ms. Livengood said that North Carolina has four military counselor positions in place where there are military installations. This includes Goldsboro, home to Seymour Johnson. For the past decade Wayne County Schools has had a military child education coalition that focuses on military support initiatives within the schools for the students, as they have about 10% military student population. They have a local action plan to ensure that they meet the needs of the military families and their military students. Ms. Livengood said they have a designated webpage that has been huge for the military families. It is on the front page of the school district website, and it has transition and deployment support in place for the students. Homebase for the State of North Carolina has been critical for parents, especially for those deployed. There is staff awareness training in place across their district to ensure that staff knows the unique needs of



military families and how they can help them through transitions and times of deployment, as well as ensuring the students' academic success.

Ms. Livengood said they have been able to access two different grant opportunities because of their military connection. This is the second year of the DoDEA grant. She said \$1.62 million was used in 7 schools with a high concentration of military students to provide professional staff development coupled with technology in hand for use by the teachers and by the students in the classroom. Operation LINK is a new partnership with ECU this year, and they have been able to start an afterschool program that brings together the military and non-military students. It involves robotics (that is virtual, online curriculum from Carnegie Mellon University) as well as a service component.

Dr. McCullen then addressed challenges. She said that complying with Read to Achieve has been a big challenge, as well as preparing for the new A-F school ratings for next year. They are working on safety equipment, and they recently had a huge safety crisis seminar where they invited two national speakers who worked with Sandy Hook and Columbine. The afterschool and mentoring programs, the 25% teacher selection process, the elimination of career status, the lack of Pre-K programs needed for underserved students, lack of technology infrastructure, English as second language needs, and identifying the military child through Powerschool (which may require legislation) are all challenges that they face. She said Wayne County alone has \$10 million worth of needs.

Chairman Martin opened the meeting to questions from members.

Mrs. Spangler asked Dr. McCullen to expand on the challenges, especially the 25% selection process for teacher merit raises.

Dr. McCullen responded that they have always worked with collaboration and teamwork when dealing with their teachers, and now they are having a tough time with teacher morale in trying to determine that 25%. She said they are working through it, but it is a challenge.

Chairman Martin invited Dr. Ray Spain, Superintendent of Warren County Schools, to come forward.

Dr. Spain thanked the committee for the opportunity to make the presentation. A copy of his PowerPoint presentation is included as Exhibit 11. A copy of the Wayne County Public Schools Annual Report is attached as Exhibit 12.

Dr. Spain said that they made a decision about six or seven years ago to compete with their competition of charter schools and private schools. They decided to do something different to provide a school choice model. High school reform is where they started in 2007-2008 after Judge Manning's order. They chose to follow a model out of Napa Valley called New Tech High School. Their first project was Warren New Tech (formerly Warren County High School). North Carolina New Schools was and is a partner who helped them greatly. By the end of the year, they will have a college prep academy and expect students to graduate from there with 18

or more college credits. They also are looking at three career academies with a focus on construction technology, business and finance, and health and medical.

They have a very unique program called 8+ that brings over middle school students who are two or more years behind, are usually failing the current grade, and have repeated others. They bring these students over to the high school campus and accelerate their learning and progress.

Dr. Spain said another project they have is in the lowest performing elementary school in the district to offer school choice. He said he would also be talking about technology later in his presentation.

Dr. Spain said that Warren County is rural with a population of about 200,000. The poverty level is about a quarter of the population. They have Free and Reduced Lunch percentage of 86%, and the median household income is \$10,000 less than the state average. The schools have enrollment of about 2,500 students in 8 schools, of which four are elementary, one is middle, and three are high schools. They are located on the Virginia border.

Dr. Spain said they looked at how to offer school choice because they had one high school that had major issues and students were leaving. They wanted all of their programs to prepare students for a career or to go to college. They made an attempt to involve parents, often at the high school level, and it has really made a difference; they have seen notable progress.

In 2007-08, DPI invited them to a meeting to look at model projects. Warren County Schools were on Judge Manning's list that was required to make some changes. They looked at project New Tech for the high school and thought it would be a good fit. They decided to take this as an opportunity to reform and not just implement a project. He said this gave him as superintendent some leverage to do some significant work.

Dr. Spain said they started with Warren County High School and Warren New Tech. North Carolina New Schools was very supportive and has been a tremendous partner. He said they knew that given a choice students would not pick either, so they knew they had to do something different. Now after eight years, they hope to have a college prep academy next year that they are calling College 18, and they fully anticipate students to graduate with 18 or more credits for college. They are also looking at three career academies that are rethinking their CTE and vocational programs with a focus on construction technology, business and finance, and health and medical.

One of the projects they had is an installation on their high school roof of the largest solar ray on any public school campus in the state. This was part of an agreement with Progress Energy and Argonne, who helped put together a renewable energy curriculum that is now part of their program at Warren County High School.

Dr. Spain said that New Tech is the best example on the ground of what 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning and teaching looks like with teachers and students working together, not relying on textbooks. There is collaboration, and all the learning is built around students doing real-life

projects and solving problems. It's the only example he's seen where a school is constructed and built around those concepts, and it works.

Warren New Tech has had three graduating classes and has a high graduation rate. The first year there were no dropouts. Both Warren Early College and New Tech have the highest attendance rates in the county. He said that something happens when parents and students get to pick where they want to go. All the students of the past three years have been accepted to either a two- or four-year school, and sometimes they don't want to go to a four-year school. An example would be a student he knows who wanted to be a nurse. He said that sometimes going to a four-year college is not what they want to do, and we should give students options.

Dr. Spain said they are really proud that their Early College has been recognized as one of the top ten public schools for the performance of African American students. They have a ceremony every year for students who earn 24 or more college credits which they call "earning the green." Most of the students are in school for five years and that's a long time for a high school student. It's a major commitment so they give them this recognition when their cohorts are graduating from high school. It is called "earning the green." He said each school gets to pick colors for their uniforms, and he wanted the principal to pick green because that was Vance Granville's color; but she chose blue, so this was how he got green in there. The district purchases a shirt for them, and this has been tremendous for their students.

Dr. Spain said they wanted institutionalized changes in Warren County and they are indebted to their county commissioners. Sometimes it was a slow and painful process, but they are now having great success. For high school registration, students and parents get to pick their high school in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and this has started real conversations between them. Principals have to recruit students. The only quota they have is on early college. All three choices are good, and they must pick the learning style that is best for their children. They do brochures, and they meet with parents. The parents are involved and engaged, and Dr. Spain said it's an amazing process to see.

Dr. Spain said the 8+ program is seeing results and parents are involved with this as well. They are seeing success with students transitioning and basically skipping eighth grade.

At the elementary school level, he said they are exploring changes.

Dr. Spain said that technology is important and since they don't have money, they leverage old computers, free software and open source software.

Dr. Spain thanked all their partners such as Teach for America, the General Assembly, Early College, and county commissioners.

Dr. Spain addressed obstacles. He said the districts are out there trying to do innovative things and teacher retention is a problem, as is the school calendar. He said that trying to get students to take college courses is very difficult if they can't start when school starts. At Warren New Tech there is a requirement for 12 credit hours from the community college, and that school is not an early college, and it is the only option.

He said another obstacle is state funding. He said the General Assembly gives money but then takes it back. It is now called LEA reductions, and it is not much of a choice. He said they need the money and when they lose it, they lose teachers. When they lose four to five teachers in a poor county it really hurts. He also said there is no revenue stream to support the work they are doing, and larger counties have more money.

Chairman Martin thanked him and asked for questions.

The chair recognized Representative Shepard for a question, and he asked Dr. Spain if they had less of a disciplinary problem with students wearing uniforms.

Dr. Spain said they took a year and studied having school uniforms. Once they implemented uniforms, there was a positive effect on the school's climate. The biggest problem they have is on picture day when students are allowed to wear their own clothes and disagreements break out.

Chairman Martin reiterated that before the next meeting they will get together with staff and review all the presentations that have been made in order to come up with recommendations for moving forward. She said to not be afraid of political implications of putting in recommendations. She said they are looking for feedback.

Chairman Horn said that it was a two-step process of asking for input and then coming back to the meeting in April with an interim report on the actions they should take. He said people are excited about what they have seen and what they can do.

Chairman Martin added that if there were topics that members would like to hear about in more depth, to include them.

Chairman Horn said that what they had learned as a committee by actually going out and touring had been invaluable.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Representative Susan Martin  
Co-Chair

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Anne Harvey Smith  
Committee Assistant

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Margie Penven  
Committee Assistant

Attachments:

- Exhibit 1: Visitor Registration Sheet
- Exhibit 2: Agenda
- Exhibit 3: Greenville Agenda
- Exhibit 4: PowerPoint Presentation: NERSBA
- Exhibit 5: NERSBA Pathways and Needs
- Exhibit 6: PowerPoint Presentation: NELA
- Exhibit 7: NELA Handout
- Exhibit 8: PowerPoint Presentation: KIPP:GCP
- Exhibit 9: PowerPoint Presentation: Wayne County Schools
- Exhibit 10: Annual Report: Wayne County Schools
- Exhibit 11: PowerPoint Presentation: Warren County Schools
- Exhibit 12: Wayne County Public Schools Annual Report

NOTE: All attachments can be found at the Committee's website:  
<http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/DocumentSites/browseDocSite.asp?nID=243>